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The University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill

The Admission of Women to the University

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The Admission of Women to the University of North Carolina

The question of co-education at the University has aroused so much discussion that it seems to me the position of the University administration should be made clear. The position is, in a word, that the policy under which the University is now operating, and which has been decided upon after careful thought, is altogether in keeping with the logic of the situation, and with the mature thought of the great majority of both men and women in the State. There appears no evidence that it should be changed. What does appear, however, is a considerable misunderstanding of just what that policy is, and a begging of the question brought about by the division of opinion as to whether a building for women should be erected at this time.

The question as to the immediate erection of a woman's building is one to be determined in terms of what is practicable now. The University's attitude toward women students, on the other hand, can be considered only, as it has been considered, in the large and permanent terms of State policy. Let us see, then, on what the University's policy is founded.

Equality for Both Sexes

In the first place, no great democracy is possible today without full and free recognition on the part of its citizens of the fact that there must be for both sexes equality of educational opportunity. The State of North Carolina, in her rapid progress needs trained women, women of wide horizons and clear vision, every whit as badly as she needs trained men. In so far as higher education opens a way to life, to larger life, that way must be open to young women and young men alike. In so far as higher education is a means, as the framers of our Constitution said

it was, to promote "the happiness of the rising generations," the rising generation without distinction of sex is entitled to its benefits.

Second. The University of North Carolina is the State University, the head of the State's educational system, maintained from the public funds, to serve the State whose creation and instrument it is. It is, as it is described in the Constitution, for the benefit of the "youth" of the State. No constitutional provisions, no legislative enactments, bar women from its halls. It is, therefore, its duty and privilege to function in the education of women in whatever ways are designed to insure to the women of the State equality of educational opportunity through the State's educational system. It cannot conceivably take any other position; it cannot for a moment be satisfied with any policy which would mean that it refused to play its part in making possible a well-rounded system of higher education through State support for women as well as for men. It cannot deny its function as the University of a democratic State, whose citizens of both sexes share equally the duties and the rights of citizenship.

Keeping the two principles stated above in mind, it is clear that the part which the University should play becomes a matter of definition, a question of fact as to what is essential to make equality of educational opportunity a reality. It is a question to be determined, that is, in the light of the facts as to what the State is doing and should do for the education of women, and which can be wisely settled on no other basis. What are the significant facts? To my mind they are these.

Development in State is Different

State universities in most sections of the country have not separated their facilities for the higher education of women from those for men. Such State universities as those of Iowa, Michigan, California—

in fact, those of the middle western states generally—offer university education to women from the freshman class up through the graduate school on the same campus and under the same instructors as for men, and have done so from their foundation. In North Carolina the development has been somewhat different. With the full assent and active support of the citizenship of the State, the institution for women at Greensboro, originated as the Normal College, is broadening into the North Carolina College for Women. I trust that no one will think me presumptuous for saying anything in this connection about another institution than the one I have the privilege to serve; it is essential if the situation is to be clarified. The North Carolina College for Women, then, with the thoughtful citizenship of both sexes in the State behind it, began some years ago its development into a State-supported institution of collegiate grade and scope, and has been recognized as a standard college by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. This matter of policy in the higher education of women is, I believe, settled in the minds of the State, and to it, as the State has defined it, the University should, and does, cordially assent.

Now this means certain things. It means, first, that the University cannot, and should not, attempt to do what Iowa, and Michigan, and California, and their neighbors have done; adopt a policy which enrolls hundreds and thousands of women in elementary classes on the same campus with men. In none of the States which have done this does there exist a separate state institution for women playing a part in the state's educational system comparable to that played by the North Carolina College for Women. The point should be emphasized, because I do not think that it is fully understood. State-supported normal schools for women exist all over the country; separated state colleges for women are rare. The

most fully developed example outside of North Carolina is probably the State College for Women of Florida, which is located at Tallahassee, while the State University (to which I believe women are not admitted at all) is at Gainesville.

In the light, then, of our local situation, I am convinced that a policy of absolutely free and unrestricted co-education at the University of North Carolina would not be wise. It would involve on a large scale a duplication of resources and of expenditure for large elementary classes; such an unnecessary duplication as should have no place in a well-conceived State system of higher education.

Graduate Work at Chapel Hill

Let us consider next the other extreme, that of graduate and professional instruction. Such instruction has been built up through years of effort at Chapel Hill. It is expensive, it is work of University, as distinguished from collegiate, type. The State demands such work of its University. It is one of the functions for the performance of which it exists. I do not believe that I am saying anything to which the friends of North Carolina College for Women would not assent in stating frankly my opinion that, save for the fields into which women largely enter, the logical place for graduate and professional work for both women and men is at the University of North Carolina. This is at once the simplest and most economical solution; the simplest in that strong schools already functioning exist at Chapel Hill; the most economical in that the duplication of specialists, books and apparatus would be a terribly costly business. Is it not clear, then, that the graduate and professional schools of the University should, as a wise measure of State policy, always be open to women as well as to men? I, personally, am absolutely convinced that it is.

As to Advanced Undergraduate Work

So far, then, a logical policy would seem to point to the exclusion of women from elementary work at the University, and their admission to graduate and professional work. But there is still another point. What of their admission to advanced undergraduate courses? The answer to this question is, I think, clear. It is inevitable that, as soon as we get beyond the elementary courses of freshman and sophomore grades, which are fairly well standardized in all good colleges, institutions will vary in the range and scope of the advanced courses which they develop in this or that department, and that students of varying types of mind and interest will find at different institutions that work which most nearly meets their needs. Local situations, matters of institutional policy, naturally lead to greater developments in advanced work at a given institution in some fields rather than others. It would seem logical, therefore, that women who find at the University as juniors and seniors advanced courses which the University has developed, and which are in line with their serious interests, should be allowed to pursue them. Any other policy would, I believe, be a contradiction in fact of the theory of equality of educational opportunity upon which our State system of higher education must be based, inasmuch as the needs of young women of widely varying types of interest must be considered if real equality of opportunity is to exist. There is in such a position no conflict of scope between the institutions at Greensboro and at Chapel Hill; rather in this respect they are to be considered as supplementing each other.

Policy Is Not New

The policy I have outlined is, I believe, fully in accord with the logic of the situation. It is not

original with me, but is the policy under which the University has been operating for years. Women have been, and are, welcome here under that policy. It has not, I think, been fully understood, and I have attempted to clarify it. I see no reason why it should be changed, save as it changes in detail of itself naturally through the years, in terms of the offerings of North Carolina College for Women and of the University in this or that department. I believe it is a policy upon which the friends of both institutions can unite, as wise alike for the institutions and for the best interests of the education of women in the State.

The question of a building for women at this time is another question. It is not, and should not be considered as, a determining factor in the University's attitude toward women. Whether it can or cannot be built at this moment is a matter which must be carefully studied in the light of all the facts, and of the best interests of the University and of the State. But whether or not it is built at this moment, the provisions of adequate material facilities for women at the University in accord with its fixed policy is an obligation which the University cannot, and has no desire to, escape. On the contrary, the University has no deeper satisfaction than that of proper provision for the needs of the growing commonwealth which it serves.

But this is apart from my main point. What I have tried to say, as clearly as I know how, is that the University believes in equality of educational opportunity for both sexes, and in its duty to see to it that it does its part to help make that principle a reality.